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LIBERALISM IN RETREAT:

THE INTERIOR DEPARTMENT, 1945-1952

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The twenty-year presence of liberal Democratic administrations from 1933 to 1953 has stimulated a prevailing interpretation that the period represented basically continuity in domestic policy. The usual assumption has been that the Truman administration did much to institutionalize the New Deal and that the Fair Deal, despite a recalcitrant Congress, managed some modest extensions of the Roosevelt legacy. One of the reasons for this interpretation, which appears regardless of ideological positions, is that historians have focused chiefly on social-welfare legislation; they have thus neglected many of the other innovative contributions of the New Deal, and have all but ignored the manner in which succeeding regimes administered New Deal measures.¹

In this paper I propose to test this prevailing interpretation of the continuity of liberalism from New Deal to Fair Deal by analyzing some of the major issues facing the Interior Department from 1945 to 1952. In so doing I hope to illuminate some neglected issues and to suggest alternative interpretations of others. The Department of the Interior seems to me to be a particularly suitable

vehicle for a case study of Truman-era liberalism. The department embraced a more diverse array of programs than any other department; this diversity, coupled with the strength of the department during the Roosevelt years, made it an unusually full expression of the New Deal's many facets. Moreover, the continuity of leadership in the department from New Deal to Fair Deal made it seem the embodiment of the liberal tradition. Secretary Harold L. Ickes served until February 15, 1946, affording an unusual opportunity to watch an old New Dealer orient his department to the problems of the postwar. Oscar L. Chapman, who served as secretary from December 1, 1949, to January 20, 1953, had been assistant secretary for thirteen years under Ickes and under secretary from 1946 to 1949. Chapman's unusual tenure made him appear to contemporary liberal observers as "one of the few authentic New Dealers left in the Cabinet."²

To understand the varying positions of the Interior Department, I want to sketch briefly the public philosophies of the three secretaries of the period 1933-1953 with an eye toward their distinctive approaches. Secretary Ickes maintained a balanced approach between conservation for use and conservation for preservation. On the one hand he strengthened the department's developmental capabilities, particularly public-power activities. On the other, he

created three wilderness parks (Kings Canyon, Olympic, and Everglades), set aside other wilderness areas, and displayed firm resistance to anything that impaired the national parks' inviolability. He encouraged valley authorities for river-basin development and comprehensive planning -- under his jurisdiction, to be sure. "The old curmudgeon" also retained an old progressive's suspicion of private interests, especially big oil companies and big ranchers, who wanted to exploit the public domain for their own advantage. The balanced conservation impulse is, as Otis Graham has remarked, "so nourishing to the impulse to see things in their total web of relationships" and thus encouraged an organic view of society. This outlook carried over into policy towards dependent peoples, particularly Indians, where Ickes supported the Indian New Deal's fostering of Indian identity and community. President Roosevelt shared much of this organic sense, and his support of Ickes' programs proved indispensable.³

When Ickes fell out of the Truman cabinet in February 1946 in a celebrated dispute over the nomination of oil man Ed Pauley to be under secretary of the navy, the New Deal was delivered into the hands of Julius A. "Cap" Krug. A Milwaukee-born electric-power engineer, Krug was a protege of Bernard Baruch and David Lilienthal and had served as chairman of the War Production Board. Krug's public philosophy was hard to discern; he was essentially a

technocrat with mildly liberal leanings. His main interest appeared to lie in river-basin development, emphasizing huge dams. But it was hard to tell. Despite unquestioned administrative ability, he quickly lost interest in his new job and exerted little control over the department.⁴

When Krug resigned in November 1949, Truman elevated Oscar Chapman from under secretary to secretary. Born in piedmont Virginia in 1896, Chapman moved to Denver, Colorado, after World War I, where he became a protege of crusading juvenile judge Ben Lindsey and Senator Edward P. Costigan. Chapman had been a fervent supporter of Henry A. Wallace in 1944 but he had become a Truman yeoman by 1948. Although he had carried out Ickes' programs enthusiastically, he had never imbibed the "old curmudgeon's" unifying view of society or combative crusading flair. He was by nature a conciliator and negotiator, and hence an ideal exponent of broker-state liberalism. Heavily influenced by his environment, Chapman adhered to three of the characteristic themes of midcentury liberalism -- economic growth, integration, and national defense. He considered economic growth "the very essence of our development as a nation." He actively tried to integrate minority groups into the national political and economic system, where they might have equal opportunity to compete in an expanding economy. And he backed the Truman administration's staunch

anticommunism stance, frequently emphasizing his department's role in building up American strength for the Cold War. Chapman and Krug did not enjoy the same rapport with Truman that Ickes had with Roosevelt, and Truman lacked the unifying view of his predecessor. But the secretaries tailored their programs to Truman's expectations, and differences between the president and the secretaries, particularly Chapman, were rare indeed.⁵

Interior Department activities fell under two broad headings, conservation and minority rights. I turn first to conservation, which had received a new impetus and comprehensiveness under the New Deal. The strongest case perhaps for continuity in conservation policy between the Roosevelt and Truman administrations lay in the effort to preserve a comprehensive federally centered program. The effort to assert federal authority over the oil-rich "tidelands" was representative. Ickes inaugurated the "tidelands" campaign in 1937, motivated by a desire to centralize natural-resources control and by suspicion of lax pro-business standards in state administration. The Supreme Court upheld federal jurisdiction, and Krug and Chapman staunchly rebuffed congressional attempts to "quitclaim" the "tidelands" to the states. Supported by the Eisenhower administration, the quitclaim effort succeeded in 1953. While the "tidelands" issue has often seemed a fairly clear liberal-conservative split, there was also an important element of

continuity. Both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations favored rapid exploitation of the resource, with little regard for environmental safeguards. Indeed Chapman, obsessed with the idea of providing more oil for national defense, attempted to start a "tidelands" drilling program for which he had no legal authority in 1951, and received sharp reprimands from members of Congress on both sides of the issue.⁶

The Truman-era department worked diligently to maintain its central role in public-power programs, which Ickes had greatly strengthened. Public power contributed to an economy of growth and particularly to what Chapman termed the "permanent upbuilding of the West." The budget for dam construction in the Bureau of Reclamation, the department's chief power agency, climbed rapidly after the lean years of World War II, although it fell sharply during the Korean conflict. Chapman also attempted unsuccessfully to broaden Reclamation's sphere of activity with steam generating plants, and he battled a sometimes recalcitrant Congress to construct transmission lines to carry federally produced power directly to customers. But the Truman administration's public-power record could match neither Roosevelt's nor Eisenhower's. The federal share of national electrical energy production skyrocketed from 1.6 per cent in 1937 to 12.6 per cent in 1945, then increased only slightly to 13.2 per cent in 1952, before picking up

speed again to reach 17.1 per cent in 1958.⁷

Representative of his broker approach, Chapman increasingly emphasized the works themselves to the diminution of the public policy they were to advance. As a result his support of valley authorities, which embodied the regional-planning concept of which Roosevelt and Ickes were fond, suffered. Ickes had tried to swing Truman's support behind seven river-basin authorities, which he had hoped, of course, to locate in his department. Truman leaned more toward independent TVA-style organizations; but, more significantly, he advocated only one basin authority, the Columbia Valley Authority, and never gave it more than half-hearted support. Krug worked hard for CVA. Chapman supported it at first, but by early 1950 he retreated to argue for building the dams first and then deciding on an administrative structure later. Truman's and Chapman's lukewarm support for valley authorities reflected the growth strategy of the administration: increase capacity and let distribution take care of itself.⁸

In view of this approach it may not be surprising that the Truman-era department slipped from the previous standard on a second group of conservation issues, what might be termed "redistributive" policies. The reversal could scarcely have been more stark than in Krug and Chapman's capitulation to the big grazing interests after Ickes' departure in 1946. During the war Senator Pat McCarran of Nevada had begun working to relax the

minimal grazing regulations imposed under the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. Chapman, then assistant secretary, denounced McCarran's effort as "a part of the agrarian counter-revolution" typified by the emasculation of the Farm Security Administration. "It is the organized big men against the unorganized little men; the kulaks against the peasants; the haves against the have-nots," Chapman told Ickes in 1943. The secretary hired a new grazing director, who promptly announced he would triple fees, tighten regulations, and begin a range-rehabilitation program.⁹

When Krug became secretary he scuttled Ickes' proposals for a plan drawn up by Rex Nicholson, a California livestock operator. Fees should be based not on the value of the forage or on livestock prices, Nicholson argued, but solely on the cost of administration. He outlined in turn an undernourished grazing service of just 242 employees to police 140,000,000 acres -- an area almost half again as large as the State of California; this minimal force made possible low fees. Grazing fees were increased from five cents per animal unit month to eight cents per a.u.m., but two cents per a.u.m. would go to range improvements, so the actual cost to graziers was but six cents per a.u.m. (Based on the value of the forage the fee would have been about fourteen cents per a.u.m.) Perhaps even worse, Nicholson ignored the increasing importance of the public domain for wildlife, wilderness, watersheds, and recreation.¹⁰

While congressional pressure in this situation had been formidable, the department had alternatives. The House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee was scandalized by the low fees, which it correctly pointed out represented a hidden subsidy to the graziers, and pressed the department to boost them substantially. Some influential western senators, such as Carl Hatch of New Mexico and Carl Hayden of Arizona apparently would have supported a fee of ten cents. Krug, however, accepted the plan with only minor qualifications, and even allowed the livestock operators to dictate the transfer of four officials out of the grazing service. The fees stayed at eight cents through 1953. It was only under the Eisenhower administration that the basis for calculating the fee was changed to reflect livestock prices and gradually increased to 22 cents by 1959.¹¹

Nor did the department seize the opportunity to side with the peasants against the kulaks -- or, indeed, the giant agribusiness combinations -- by enforcing the redistributive purpose of reclamation policy. The basic reclamation law of 1902 restricted an individual landowner to receiving reclamation water to irrigate only 160 acres. The law recognized that the benefits of publically funded projects should be distributed widely and should help primarily those at the bottom of the economic scale. In 1947 Michael Straus, commissioner of reclamation, induced the department solicitor to devise ingenious evasions so that practically any size

holding could receive irrigation water. Krug and Chapman both gave lip service to the 160-acre principle but did nothing to revoke Straus's subterfuge, which became a handy tool for the Eisenhower administration. Chapman in fact turned down an appeal from Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois three days before leaving office. "We certainly deserved better treatment from the avowed friends of acreage limitation," Douglas sighed. Berkeley economist Paul S. Taylor summarized the situation: Ickes was "solid," Krug was "almost solid," and Chapman "wobbled."¹²

A similar issue concerned fish traps in Alaska. Big Seattle-based food-processing companies owned 75 per cent of the large traps, which put small independent fishermen at a grave disadvantage, drained precious untaxed income out of the territory, and contributed to a serious depletion of the salmon fishery. Shortly before his resignation Ickes announced hearings on regulations designed to sharply reduce the number of traps an individual or firm could employ. When the issue fell to Krug and Chapman, however, they tried to negotiate a compromise and then gave up the struggle entirely. It was finally left for the State of Alaska, once it had acquired statehood, to end the monopoly, by which time the salmon fishery had been seriously depleted.¹³

On three representative redistribution issues -- grazing, the 160-acre law, and the fishing monopoly -- the Department of

the Interior fell back from its earlier positions. If the "agrarian counter revolution" had started in Congress during World War II, it gathered force when the executive branch threw its support on the side of the "haves" against the "unorganized have-nots."

The third crucial aspect of conservation policy was the balance between conservation for use and preservation, which came to be acutely threatened during the Truman period. During World War II the principle of park inviolability had been maintained despite serious threats, most notably the attempt to cut spruce in Olympic National Park; and, despite heavy congressional opposition, Roosevelt and Ickes had brought the beautiful Jackson Hole country into the park system. After the war lumbermen again eyed Olympic, and in 1947 Krug and Chapman supported a lumbermen's bill to deplete some 56,000 acres of the spectacular rain forest from Olympic. When a public outcry erupted, the department reversed itself and Olympic park remained intact.¹⁴

Far more serious -- indeed, the gravest threat ever to the integrity of the national parks -- was the Bureau of Reclamation's proposed Echo Park Dam. A key structure in the Upper Colorado Basin Program, the dam would inundate the spectacular canyons in the heart of Dinosaur National Monument on the Colorado-Utah border. The Echo Park proposal seemed especially sinister because dams were on the drawing boards for other national parks, including Glacier, Big Bend, Kings Canyon, and Grand Canyon.

Chapman approved construction of the Echo Park dam, which enjoyed considerable support in the West, on June 27, 1950, partly in the vain hope of insuring the reelection of Utah Senator Elbert Thomas. More broadly, Chapman argued that "the growth and development of the West depends upon the adoption of a sound Upper Colorado Basin Program, and . . . this is the most important consideration to be faced in this matter." Truman dismissed opposition to the dam by saying: "It has always been my opinion that food for coming generations is much more important than bones of the Mesozoic period." But defense may have overshadowed food. Chapman intimated strongly to some associates that he had approved the dam solely because it would provide power for an atomic plant. Whether this was the real reason is difficult to evaluate, but when preservationist groups mounted tremendous pressure, and when the atomic plant was located in Ohio, Chapman backed off. He did not directly reverse himself but called for studies of alternative sites. He failed to endorse any and eventually gladly handed the issue to the Republican administration, which also pressed for the Echo Park location before eventually dropping it entirely. By initially agreeing to Echo Park Dam, Chapman demonstrated how economic growth and national defense weighted the conservation balance in favor of development over preservation. It was not surprising that the Truman administration, except for the brief John F. Kennedy

regime, was the only one between Grover Cleveland's and Gerald Ford's that failed to establish a new national park.¹⁵

To summarize the Truman-era record of the Interior Department on conservation: The strongest case for continuity with the Ickes-Roosevelt regime lay in preserving centralized federal control, although even here there was some slippage in the regional-planning concept. On redistributive issues the department slipped badly, and it raised an unprecedented threat to the conservation balance.

The area in which one would expect the Interior Department of the Truman years to show the most advances over the New Deal era is minority rights. The Roosevelt administration's achievements for minorities were sparse, and the Truman regime boasted the first civil-rights program. The Truman administration's goal, Donald R. McCoy and Richard T. Ruetten have argued, was the integration of all minority groups into the mainstream of American life. Integration was a logical development in midcentury liberalism; it entailed essentially opening the system so that individuals could compete on a basis of equal opportunity in an expanding economy. For reasons of both politics and principle, expanding minority rights seemed more urgent to the Truman administration than to its predecessor. But because of changing ideas of community from the 1930s and because of altered perceptions of national security, the

Interior Department under Truman left a mixed record.¹⁶

I want to discuss minority rights under three headings -- black rights in the District of Columbia, territorial administration, and Indian policy. The clearest departmental advance occurred somewhat surprisingly with black rights in the District of Columbia. Under Harold Ickes the Interior Department had established probably as good a record on black rights as any agency during the FDR years. But the department's actions had been limited largely to such things as hiring some blacks, integrating its facilities, and staging some symbolic events such as the Marian Anderson concert at the Lincoln Memorial. Trying to encourage home rule, the department had tried since 1942 to transfer recreational facilities to a district board; but when the local organization refused to operate integrated swimming pools, the department kept its pools under its jurisdiction. Chapman initiated a special training program for pool personnel and in the summer of 1950 overrode intense local opposition to open the pools, integrated. The season ran smoothly and provided an important early demonstration of successful integration.¹⁷

The department was also one of the most consistent proponents and supporters of the Justice Department's characteristic *amicus curiae* briefs. Chapman appears to have been particularly influential in persuading Solicitor General Philip Perlman to carry an appeal testing the validity of some unenforced laws passed by the

District of Columbia government during Reconstruction that outlawed segregation in public places. Perlman's intervention, carried to fruition by the Eisenhower administration, culminated in a vindication of the laws and marked a major step in dismantling segregation in the district. Krug and Chapman also supported sundry other civil-rights cases, including opposition to restricted housing covenants and discrimination against Indian voting and Social Security rights. With black rights the Truman-period department expanded the Roosevelt-era foundation.¹⁸

A second area, in which the department had primary responsibility, concerned territorial peoples. George Kennan expressed the colonial dilemma pointedly: "A king can have subjects; it is a question whether a republic can." Territorial administration began to improve under Ickes, who appears to have favored extending more rights to territorial peoples; except for beginning a step-by-step process to extend more self-government to Puerto Rico, however, his administration recorded few concrete measures. After the war the dynamics of anticolonialism demanded more rights and more self-government for United States territories, but changing perceptions of national security undercut the department's initiatives.¹⁹

The Interior Department provided indispensable leadership in pushing through three administration civil-rights measures for

Puerto Rico. Truman appointed the first native governor, Jesús Piñero, in 1946. A year later Congress gave Puerto Ricans the right to elect their own governor, making the island the only United States territory to enjoy that measure of self-government. The vexing status question was temporarily resolved when Congress created the commonwealth in 1950. The Truman administration had extended more self-government to Puerto Rico than had all of the administrations from 1898 to 1945 to all of the possessions combined. The commonwealth compromise benefitted from a broad consensus that made it scarcely a liberal-conservative issue at all, and it received overwhelming support at the time from the Puerto Ricans. Yet the nature of the compromise, which reflected the United States' desire to maintain the strategic island within the American defense system but with something less than full association, proved ultimately incapable of resolving the status question.²⁰

The liberal-conservative consensus did not extend to the issue of statehood for Alaska and Hawaii. The Interior Department worked enthusiastically for statehood, especially for Alaska, and came close to pushing it through Congress in 1950 before the Korean War froze the bud. The department's support helped lay the ground for statehood for both territories, but statehood had to await Eisenhower's second term.²¹

The little possessions in the Pacific provided perhaps the clearest case of the administration's attitude towards territorial peoples, for policy there was determined chiefly by the executive branch. Ickes, Krug, and Chapman resolutely insisted the Pacific islands should come under civilian, not military, governance. As Krug put it in 1947: American territorial government in the Pacific was a form "we would not tolerate on the mainland and would probably criticize if it existed under a foreign regime." Guam and American Samoa had been ruled by nearly absolute Navy governors under a one-sentence executive order issued by William McKinley in 1899. When the United States wrested the Micronesian mandates from Japan at the end of the war, the military insisted on controlling the islands "so that we can project our own offensive forces against the Asiatic mainland." The Joint Chiefs of Staff insisted on United States control of the island string from Hawaii to the Marianas -- within 2000 miles of the Asian coast -- which Secretary of Defense James Forrestal liked to call "the near Pacific." Ickes argued at a cabinet meeting in January 1945 that the islands should be placed under United Nations trusteeship and administered by a civilian agency, presumably his Department of the Interior. Forrestal retorted with the suggestion that "Mr. Ickes be made King of Polynesia, Micronesia, and the Pacific Ocean Area." After two years of delay the military finally agreed in 1947 to eventual

civilian rule. "They squawked and creaked, particularly Forrestal," said Krug, "but [Secretary of State George] Marshall seemed to think it was a sound thing to do." Truman, in turn, committed his administration to implementing in the Pacific "those fundamental human rights and that democratic form of government which are the rich heritage of the people of the United States."²²

The military continued to seize every excuse for delaying the transfer to civilians, and once the transfer took place, civilian practice raised the question whether it was worth the effort to achieve. Guam, the most populous and most Americanized of the islands, came under civilian government on August 1, 1950, and Congress passed an organic act extending some provisions of the Bill of Rights to Guamanians. Acts of the unicameral legislature remained subject to the veto of the appointed governor or the president, and Guamanians failed to secure badly needed preference in land holding to protect them from the formidable outside financial pressure. The Interior Department assured the Navy that security regulations would be no less stringent than before. The civilians proved true to their word: Aliens without security clearances were deported, and American citizens who lacked Navy clearances -- one of whom was former Senator Glen Taylor, Henry Wallace's running mate in 1948 -- were denied entry.²³

American Samoa, in which traditional, nonindividualistic culture was stronger, came under civilian rule on July 1, 1951. Samoans blocked passage of a proposed organic act because its forms of government threatened the established social structure and because of the lack of safeguards for Samoan landholding. (A Samoan constitution was finally promulgated by Secretary of the Interior Fred Seaton in 1960 and included the land safeguards.) The first two civilian governors served less than a year apiece and needlessly offended Samoan patriarchs; Congress cut appropriations from the level they had reached under the Navy; and Secretary Chapman, to the extent that he had a policy, encouraged assimilation and imposition of mainland political forms instead of preserving Samoan culture.²⁴

The Interior Department's insistence on civilian government for Micronesia finally bore fruit on July 1, 1951. Four years earlier the United States had worked out a unique arrangement with the United Nations to make Micronesia a strategic trusteeship, the only such hybrid in existence; the very concept was a contradiction in terms. Truman gave the UN his "solemn assurance" that Micronesians would receive "a full measure of individual rights and liberties." But Marshall came closer to the meaning of strategic trusteeship when he told Congress in 1947: "We must observe certain forms, but we have . . . almost complete liberty of action."

The only change Interior Department administration brought to the Trust Territory was a high commissioner, who did not even reside in the territory; the Micronesians received no additional rights and no forms of self-government. Security restrictions were even more stringent than on neighboring Guam, as Micronesia remained off-limits to most Americans throughout the 1950s. As his final important act of territorial policy, Truman overrode Interior Department objections and on January 1, 1953, transferred two of the Marianas, Saipan and Tinian, back to Navy control. Those two islands thus achieved the distinction of being the only areas under United States administration ever to revert to military rule after having enjoyed civil governance.²⁵

Midcentury liberalism reached distinct limits in the territories, and for a predictable reason: exaggerated ideas of national security requirements undercut the promised bestowal of basic rights. The Department of the Interior displayed the best record in the executive branch on territorial matters, but the department's stance was seriously flawed by its none-too-reluctant acquiescence in security restrictions. Comparison with the Roosevelt administration on the territories is somewhat difficult because its successor faced a different situation, but Ickes' firm stance suggests he would have fought the defense establishment more tenaciously than his conciliatory successors. Overall on territorial

policy, the achievements of Krug and Chapman stem directly from the foundation laid directly by their predecessor, and their reversals had no precedent in pre-1946 administration.

The most direct and most dramatic instance of the Fair Deal reversing the New Deal occurred in the third and most important area of minority rights, Indian policy. Under Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier and Secretary Ickes the Indian New Deal had rejected the centuries-old policy of assimilation in favor of Indian identity and community. The Indian land base was stabilized, some measure of Indian self-government was introduced, and Indian culture received a newly positive emphasis. The Indian New Deal helped make the 1930s, said Vine Deloria Jr., "the greatest days of Indian life in the twentieth century." The Indian New Deal suffered badly during World War II, and in the late 1940s policy began to drift back towards assimilation.²⁶

The outright reversal began in 1950. Chapman argued that the Indians should be "intermingled gradually and mixed with our people"; later he called for a "full-scale drive" for the "complete independence of the Indian people." His choice for commissioner of Indian affairs was Dillon S. Myer, former director of the War Relocation Authority, who implemented what he termed "withdrawal programming." Myer's theory was that Indians would eventually cease to exist as a separate people and hence should be integrated

into the mainstream of American life, in keeping with the civil-rights emphasis of the Truman administration. The Myer-Chapman regime planned to end the special status of the Indians and gradually withdraw Bureau of Indian Affairs services. They encouraged Indians to leave their communities for the cities, ended efforts to preserve Indian culture, phased out special Indian schools, and abandoned the fight to preserve Indian lands. In one of his most sinister moves Myer, with mixed support from Chapman, attempted to assert his control over attorneys hired by the Indians. Myer acknowledged that Indian opposition to his program was "nearly unanimous," but he persisted in carrying it out regardless of Indian consent. The Truman administration's "withdrawal programming" was in all essential respects the same as the Eisenhower administration's disastrous "termination" policy.²⁷

To summarize the Truman-era Interior Department's record on minority rights: The department significantly expanded on its predecessor's foundation for black rights in the District of Columbia, it left a contradictory record in the territories, and it implemented a wholesale reversal of the Indian New Deal.

In conclusion I want to pose two questions. First, how does the overall record of the Interior Department from 1946 through 1952 compare with the previous twelve years? The Truman-era department preserved some of the New Deal programs and in a few cases

expanded on the New Deal foundation. But in a number of important cases the New Deal programs suffered severe slippage and even outright abandonment. The department displayed little of the vision and innovative spirit of the period 1933 through 1945. The record of Krug and Chapman dismayed Ickes and some of his former officials, such as John Collier; the former secretary was particularly distressed by Chapman's stand on Indians and preservation. This is not to suggest that the department under Ickes achieved complete success, simply that it generally moved in the right direction and attained a certain minimum standard. It may have been politically possible to achieve more in the 1930. But after World War II the slippage often could be traced not to public indifference or congressional pressure but to executive decision. In some cases it was congressional pressure and public outcry that pressured the executive to live up to the previous standard. The department not merely inherited domestic deadlock but contributed to its own decline. The Interior Department in 1952 more nearly resembled that of the Eisenhower years than of the New Deal era.²⁸

Second, what does the Interior Department suggest about midcentury liberalism? Much more work needs to be done, but there are clues that the department's decline was not isolated. Truman's appointment of conservative secretaries like John Snyder at the Treasury and Charles Sawyer at Commerce make those

departments unlikely repositories of liberalism. The Truman housing program, one of the Fair Deal's chief legislative victories, catered to the construction and real-estate lobbies. Other agencies which dealt with public power, the Department of Agriculture and the Army Corps of Engineers, had weaker records than the Department of the Interior. Antitrust activity, confused under the New Deal, was minimal under the Fair Deal, as were any redistributive tax policies. Thus the verdict on midcentury liberalism suggests that, both in terms of the standard that liberalism had attained earlier and of the new challenges it faced, the Truman era represented liberalism in retreat.²⁹

NOTES

1. A characteristic statement of this interpretation is Richard Kirkendall's contention that Truman tried to "build upon the liberalism of his predecessor" but inherited a "domestic deadlock" that he could not break (Kirkendall, "Harry S. Truman," in Morton Borden, ed., America's Eleven Greatest Presidents [Chicago, rev. ed., 1971], pp. 277, 282). The most comprehensive study of the Truman administration, and the one that addresses the question of the continuity of liberalism most fully, is Alonzo L. Hamby, Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism (New York, 1973). Hamby concludes that Truman "successfully defended and institutionalized the New Deal" (p. 513) and that the administration, through its legislative accomplishments and abandonment of the Popular Front, moved liberalism "beyond the New Deal" (p. 516). Other overviews which stress continuity include Richard E. Neustadt, "From FDR to Truman: Congress and the Fair Deal," reprinted in Frank Otto Gatell, Paul Goodman, and Allen Weinstein, eds., The Growth of American Politics, v. II (New York, 1972), pp. 369-400; William E. Leuchtenburg, "A Troubled Feast," in Leuchtenburg, ed., The Unfinished Century: America Since 1900 (Boston, 1973), pp. 693-694; Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency: The History of a Triumphant Succession (New York, 1966); Dewey W. Grantham, The United States Since 1945:

The Ordeal of Power (New York, 1976), ch. 3; Eric Goldman, The Crucial Decade -- and After: America, 1945-1960 (New York, 1960), p. 92. New Left and revisionist historians also suggest continuity; for them the failures of the Truman administration are those of FDR writ large (Barton J. Bernstein, "America in War and Peace: The Test of Liberalism," in Bernstein, ed., Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History [New York, 1969], pp. 289-321). An exception to the continuity interpretation is Bert Cochran, Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency (New York, 1973). For assessments of Truman-period domestic historiography see Harvard Sitkoff, "Years of the Locust: Interpretations of Truman's Presidency Since 1965," and Hamby, "The Clash of Perspectives and the Need for New Syntheses," both in Kirkendall, ed., The Truman Period as a Research Field: A Reappraisal, 1972 (Columbia, Mo., 1974), and Richard Polenberg, "Historians and the Liberal Presidency: Recent Appraisals of Roosevelt and Truman," South Atlantic Quarterly, LXXV (1976), 20-35. Moving away from overall interpretations, most of which emphasize continuity because they repeat familiar social-welfare themes, some incisive topical studies call into question the assumptions of New Deal-Fair Deal continuity. Two such are Otis L. Graham Jr., Toward a Planned Society, (New York, 1976), ch. 3, and Elmo L. Richardson, Dams, Parks & Politics: Resource Development and Preservation

in the Truman-Eisenhower Era (Lexington, Ky., 1973), both of which emphasize continuity between Truman and Eisenhower.

2. The quotation, representative of many others, is from Thomas Sancton, "Gentle Crusader," Nation, CLXVI (March 5, 1949), 267. Chapman has also drawn accolades from historians (see Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, p. 335, and Donald R. McCoy and Richard T. Ruetten, Quest and Response: Minority Rights and the Truman Administration [Lawrence, Kansas, 1973], p. 204).

3. Richardson, Dams, Parks & Politics, ch. 1; Graham, Toward a Planned Society, pp. 19-21, 103. See also generally Edgar B. Nixon, ed., Franklin D. Roosevelt & Conservation, 1911-1945 (Hyde Park, N. Y., 1957, 2 vol.); Anna Lou Riesch, "Conservation Under Franklin D. Roosevelt" (unpub. Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Wisconsin, 1952); The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes (New York, 1955, 3 vol).

4. Richardson, Dams, Parks & Politics, pp. 22-23; David Lilienthal, The Journals of David E. Lilienthal, v. 2, The Atomic Energy Years, 1945-1950 (New York, 1964), pp. 6, 25; Warner W. Gardner oral history, Harry S. Truman Library (hereafter HSTL), Independence, Mo., p. 30; author's interview with Chapman, August 15, 1973.

5. Quotation from Chapman speech to Americans for Democratic Action, January 27, 1950, box 76, Chapman Papers, HSTL; Koppes, "Oscar L. Chapman: A Liberal at the Interior

Department, 1933-1953" (unpub. Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Kansas, 1974), ch. 1, 4. Most of the issues discussed in this paper are drawn from more extended treatments in the author's dissertation.

6. "Tidelands" -- strictly speaking, lands between high and low tide -- were not in dispute. The federal government asserted dominion solely over submerged lands seaward of the point of low tide. A more appropriate term for the area in question was "submerged lands" or "marginal sea." "Summary of Departmental Action with Respect to Submerged Lands," box 101; Transcripts of Chapman telephone conversations with James McGranery, June 6, 1952, and Joseph O'Mahoney, June 9, 1952, box 102, Chapman Papers; O'Mahoney to Chapman, June 7, 1952, Official File 56F, Harry S. Truman Papers, HSTL; Claimed Authority for Seizure and Lease of Certain Submerged Lands Under the Federal Property Act, Hearing before the Committee on the Judiciary, Senate, 82nd Cong., 2nd Sess., June 12, 1952; Ernest R. Bartley, The Tidelands Oil Controversy: A Legal and Historical Analysis (Austin, Tex., 1953), pp. 159-257; Gerald D. Nash, United States Oil Policy, 1890-1964: Business and Government in Twentieth Century America (Pittsburgh, 1968), pp. 208-231; Gary W. Reichard, The Reaffirmation of Republicanism: Eisenhower and the Eighty-Third Congress (Knoxville, 1975), pp. 149-152. In another oil and gas issue Chapman apparently proved to be the deciding influence in getting Truman to veto a bill sponsored by Oklahoma Democratic Senator Robert Kerr

that would have deregulated natural gas. (Chapman to Frank Pace, April 6, 1950, box 22, Chapman Office Files, Records of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48, National Archives; Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, pp. 346-348.) In a demonstration of the growing conservatism of midcentury regulatory commissions, the Federal Power Commission in 1951 renounced its authority to regulate certain gas companies, but in 1954 the Supreme Court ordered the FPC to reassume the power (Nash, United States Oil Policy, pp. 234-235).

7. Quotation from Chapman to Ickes, Oct. 13, 1943, box 67, Chapman Papers, HSTL; Philip J. Funigiello, Toward a National Power Policy: The New Deal and the Electric Utility Industry, 1933-1941 (Pittsburgh, 1973), ch. 7-9; Minutes, Conference of Secretaries, Aug. 30, 1951, box 58; John R. Waltrip, "Public Power During the Truman Administration" (unpub. Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Missouri, 1965), pp. 95-98; Phyllis R. De Luna, "Public Versus Private Power During the Truman Administration: A Study of Fair Deal Liberalism" (unpub. Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Alberta, 1974), pp. 547-581; Electrical World, CXLI (Jan. 25, 1954), 167, CLIII (Feb. 29, 1960), 81, CLVII (Feb. 26, 1962), 59. Public power is frequently cited as one of the "substantial" Fair Deal legislative accomplishments (see for instance Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, p. 515, and Leuchtenburg, "A Troubled Feast," p. 673).

8. Ickes to President, Nov. 23, 1945, OF 360, Truman Papers, HSTL; Columbia River Basin, Hearings before Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Senate, 81st Cong., 1st and 2nd Sess., p. 88; David E. Bell to Charles E. Murphy, June 1, 1950, box 21, Murphy Files, Truman Papers, HSTL; Monroe Sweetland to William H. Boyle Jr., May 25, 1950, box 1, Bell Files, Truman Papers; Chapman to Benton J. Stong, June 20, 1950, File 1-318, RG 48; Richardson, Dams, Parks & Politics, ch. 2; George W. Scott, "Arthur Langlie: Republican Governor in a Democratic Age," (unpub. Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Washington, 1972), p. 373; F. Ross Peterson, Prophet Without Honor: Glen H. Taylor & The Fight for American Liberalism (Lexington, Ky., 1974), pp. 76-77.

9. One head of cattle or five sheep or goats equals one animal unit month. Quotation from Chapman to Ickes, Oct. 13, 1943, box 67, Chapman Papers, HSTL. Clarence Forsling to Secretary, Jan. 14, 1946, Chapman to Ickes, File 6-2, RG 48; C. L. Forsling to Secretary, March 13, 1947, box 74, Arthur Carhart Papers, Conservation Library, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colo.; E. Louise Pfeffer, The Closing of the Public Domain: Disposal and Reservation Policies, 1900-1950 (Stanford, 1951); ch. xv; Phillip O. Foss, The Politics of Grass: The Administration of Grazing on the Public Domain (Seattle, 1960), pp. 84-90, 171-193; Wesley Calef, Private Grazing and Public Lands: Studies of the Local

Management of the Taylor Grazing Act (Chicago, 1960), p. 78:

Grant McConnell, Private Power and American Democracy (New York, 1966), pp. 203-211.

10. Rex L. Nicholson, "Reorganization Plan No. 3 as Proposed to J.A. Krug, Secretary of the Interior, Nov. 12, 1946," box 27, Chapman Papers, HSTL.

11. Transcripts of telephone conversations between Krug and Nicholson, Oct. 17, 1946, Krug and Chapman, Sept. 23, 25, 1946, Feb. 7, 1947, box 48, Krug Papers, Library of Congress; McCarran to Chapman, Sept. 16, 1946, Krug to McCarran, Sept. 30, 1946, box 24, Chapman Papers, HSTL; Dan C. McKinney to President, Feb. 11, 1947, OF 6Z, HSTL; Nicholson to William B. Wright, Sylvan J. Pauley, and Gordon Griswold, April 1, 1947, File 6-2, RG 48; "Wolfsohn Resigns," National Wool Grower, XXXVII (July 1947), 16; "Statement by Dan Hughes," National Wool Grower, XXXVI (Aug. 1946), 11-12; Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1960 (Washington, 1960). Relying mainly on printed sources, Peffer attributes the capitulation almost solely to congressional pressure and overlooks the issue of personnel (Closing of the Public Domain, ch. xvi-xvii).

12. Quotations from Douglas to Taylor, Jan. 23, 1953, 26.3 Case File Correspondence, Douglas Papers, Chicago Historical Society, and California Social Scientist, Paul S. Taylor oral history

Bancroft Library, Univ. of California at Berkeley, v. II, p. 234.

Chapman to Douglas, Jan. 17, 1953, 26.3 Case File Correspondence, Douglas Papers; Taylor, "The Excess Land Law: Execution of a Public Policy," Yale Law Journal, LXIV (Feb. 1955), 506. Except for differing ideological grounds, the only objection to the 160-acre law would be that it was insufficient to support a family adequately. In the main area of controversy, however, the Central Valley of California, 160 irrigated acres (or 320 for a married couple) was ample. In any case the attack was not really on whether 160 acres per se was adequate but whether there should be any limitation at all.

13. W. C. Arnold to Chapman, March 4, 1946, box 9, Chapman Office Files, RG 48; Gardner to Acting Secretary, Feb. 27, 1946, press release, March 6, 1946, box 3, Gardner Papers, HSTL; Richard A. Cooley, Politics and Conservation: The Decline of the Alaska Salmon (New York, 1963), ch. 3; Ernest L. Gruening, The State of Alaska (New York, 2nd ed., 1968), pp. 395-398, 402-404, 407.

14. Chapman to Henry M. Jackson, March 14, 1947, box 105, Chapman to Willard Van Name, May 2, 1947, box 106, Chapman Papers, HSTL; Newton Drury to Irving Clark, April 30, 1947, File 602, Records of the National Park Service, RG 79, NA; Krug to Hugh Butler, July 30, 1948, box 23, Chapman Office Files, RG 48; Seattle Times, April 10, 1947; Elmo Richardson, "Olympic National

Park: 20 Years of Controversy," Forest History, XII (April 1968), 6-15; Donald C. Swain, Wilderness Defender: Horace M. Albright and Conservation (Chicago, 1970), pp. 153-158, 160-164; John Ise, Our National Park Policy: A Critical History (Baltimore, 1961), pp. 498-504.

15. Quotations from Chapman to Arthur Carhart, Nov. 6, 1951, box 122, Chapman Papers, HSTL, and Truman to Irving Brant, Feb. 20, 1951 OF 284, HSTL. Warne to Chapman June 8, 1950, Chapman to Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation, and Director, National Park Service, June 27, 1950, File 8-3, RG 48; Chapman address to National Audubon Society, Nov. 13, 1951, box 77, Chapman Papers, HSTL; author's interview with William E. Warne, Sacramento, Calif., Dec. 30, 1973; William Voigt Jr. to J.W. Penfold and Carhart, Dec. 11, 1950, box 82, Carhart Papers, Denver Public Library; Richardson, Dams, Parks & Politics, ch. 3; Owen Stratton and Philip Sirotkin, The Echo Park Controversy (University, Alabama, 1959).

16. McCoy and Ruetten, Quest and Response, p. 304.

17. Transcript of telephone conversation between Krug and Carlton Skinner, Aug. 10, 1949, box 50, Krug Papers, LC; Chapman to President, Sept. 6, 1950, OF 6P, HSTL; McCoy and Ruetten, Quest and Response, pp. 337-338; Constance M. Green, The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital

(Princeton, 1967), pp. 286-288.

18. Chapman to Perlman, June 12, 1951, box 120, Chapman to Attorney General, Sept. 11, 1947, box 107, Chapman Papers, HSTL; Chapman to President, July 8, 1948, box 14, Chapman Office Files, RG 48; Felix Cohen to William A. Brophy, Dec. 5, 1947, box 16, Brophy Papers, HSTL; McCoy and Ruetten, Quest and Response, pp. 157-158, 201-203, 212.

19. Quotation from George F. Kennan, American Diplomacy, 1900-1950 (New York, 1951), p. 21. Surendra Bhana, The Development of the Puerto Rican Status Question, 1936-1968 (Lawrence, Kan., 1975), p. 211; Gruening, Many Battles: The Autobiography of Ernest Gruening (New York, 1973), ch. 14.

20. Irwin Silverman to Brophy, July 15, 30, 1947, box 8, Brophy Papers; Chapman to J. Hardin Peterson, April 28, 1950, box 115, transcript of radio interview between Chapman and Bert Andrews, Nov. 4, 1950, box 76, Chapman Papers, HSTL; Bhana, Development of the Puerto Rican Status Question, ch. 6-8.

21. Transcript of telephone conversation between Hugh Butler and W. C. Arnold, June 27, 1950, box 221, Butler Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln; Director, Office of Territories, to Secretary, Sept. 25, 1950, box 33, Chapman Office Files, RG 48; Richard E. Neustadt to Stephen Spingarn, June 28, 1950, box 3, Charles Murphy Papers, HSTL; Chapman to Murphy, Nov. 22, 1950, box 117, Chapman Papers, HSTL; 96

Congressional Record 11984, 14698; Gruening, Battle for Alaska Statehood (College, Alaska, 1967), pp. 7-8, 55; Claus-M. Naske, An Interpretative History of Alaska Statehood (Anchorage, 1973), pp. 75-109. Ickes had endorsed Alaskan statehood in mid-1945 (Naske, p. 71).

22. Quotations from Krug to President, n.d., ca. Feb. 1947, File 9-0-7, RG 48; Joint Chiefs of Staff memo, "Strategic Areas and Trusteeships in the Pacific," Oct. 19, 1946, box 138, President's Secretary's File, HSTL; transcript of telephone conversation between Forrestal and John Foster Dulles, Dec. 16, 1946, box 14, Forrestal Records, General Records of the Dept. of the Navy, RG 80, NA; Walter Millis and E.S. Duffield, eds., The Forrestal Diaries (New York, 1951), p. 21; transcript of telephone conversation between Krug and C. Girard Davidson, May 16, 1947, box 74, Krug Papers, LC; Public Papers of the Presidents: Truman, 1947, p. 288.

23. 64 U.S. Statutes 384; Whitney T. Perkins, Denial of Empire: The United States and Its Dependencies (Leyden, 1962), pp. 313-314; Carlton Skinner to Chapman, May 22, 1952, box 70, Chapman Papers, HSTL.

24. Fred I. Simon to Chapman and Francis P. Matthews, March 26, 1951, James P. Davis to Chapman, Feb. 13, 1951, File 9-0-7, RG 48; John W. Coulter, The Pacific Dependencies of the United States (New York, 1957), pp. 84-91; Felix and Marie M.

Keesing, Elite Communication in Samoa: A Study of Leadership (Stanford, 1956), pp. 39-47, 110-112, 254-258.

25. Quotation from Trusteeship Agreement for the Territory of the Pacific Islands, Hearing before Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., on S.J. Res. 143, p. 5. Chapman to Matthews, June 13, 1951, box 120, Report of Proceedings, Hearing . . . on S.J. Res. 149, April 17, 1952, box 73, Chapman Papers, HSTL; Vernon Northrop to Murphy, Sept. 10, 1952, box 4, Robert L. Dennison Files, Truman Papers, HSTL; "A Step Backward," n.d., box 76, Philleo Nash Papers, HSTL; E.J. Kahn Jr., A Reporter in Micronesia (New York, 1966), pp. 39-40; Emil J. Sady, The United Nations and Dependent Peoples (Washington, 1956), p. 201; Earl S. Pomeroy, Pacific Outpost: American Strategy in Guam and Micronesia (Stanford, 1951), p. xix. Except for Pomeroy's work, which is too early to deal extensively with the Truman, and for brief references in McCoy and Ruetten, historians have all but ignored the formation of postwar policy toward the Pacific islands. By masking the incompatibility between subject and citizen by implementing civilian rule, the Interior Department may actually have retarded political development in Micronesia. The Truman period laid the foundation for a policy of neglect that began to be broken only in the 1960s. The Marianas have been detached from the Trust Territory and became an American commonwealth, making the United

States the only nation to acquire noncontiguous territory after World War II. Guam and the other Marianas appear destined to become the American anchor in the Pacific in the event of United States withdrawal from the Asian mainland (see especially James H. Webb, Micronesia and U.S. Pacific Strategy: A Blueprint for the 1980s [New York, 1974], p. vii, 64, 73). The Trust Territory of the Pacific remains the only trusteeship, all the others having achieved independence or free association. The future status of the islands is under negotiation (see especially, Eugene B. Mihaly, "Tremors in the Western Pacific," Foreign Affairs, LII [July 1974], 839-849; Carl Heine, "Micronesia's Future Political Status Commission: its rendezvous with destiny," Journal of Pacific History, VI [1971], 133-151; Stanley A. de Smith, Microstates and Micronesia: Problems of America's Pacific Islands and Other Minute Territories [New York, 1970], pp. 169-189; and Allan W. Cameron, "The Strategic Significance of the Pacific Islands: A New Debate Begins," Orbis, XIX [Fall 1975], 1012-1036).

26. Quotation from Jennings C. Wise, ed. by Vine Deloria Jr., The Red Man in the New World Drama (New York, 1971), p. 360. For a fuller treatment of the transformation of Indian policy from 1933 to 1953 see the author's forthcoming "From New Deal to Termination: Liberalism and Indian Policy, 1933-1953," Pacific Historical Review.

27. Quotations from Nomination of Oscar L. Chapman to Be Secretary of the Interior, Hearing before the Committee on

Interior and Insular Affairs, Senate, 81st Cong., 2nd Sess., Jan. 16, 1950, p. 12, and Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, on H.R. 7176, April 16, 1952, p. 8, and Myer memo of March 20, 1953, reprinted in Myer, An Autobiography, oral history, Bancroft Library, Univ. of California at Berkeley (copy, HSTL), p. 282.

28. Ickes Diary, Dec. 17, 1950, Jan. 7, 1951, and correspondence, boxes 61-63, Ickes Papers, LC; much correspondence, box 34, Collier Papers, Yale Univ. Library. Of the four postwar secretaries -- Krug, Chapman, Douglas McKay, and Fred Seaton -- Richardson appears to give the highest marks to Seaton (Dams, Parks & Politics, p. 198); but he concludes that on the development-versus-preservation issue there was "no substantial alteration in procedure or substance" between 1946 and 1956. Graham concludes that, after Roosevelt's death, there ensued a period of fifteen to twenty years of policy continuity (Toward a Planned Society, p. 100).

29. Kirkendall, "Harry S. Truman," p. 278; Richard O. Davies, Housing Reform During the Truman Administration (Columbia, Mo., 1966), pp. 133-142; De Luna, "Public Versus Private Power," pp. 547-582; see also Bernstein, "America in War and Peace."